

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1977

As Reported by House Committee On:
Education

Title: An act relating to skill centers.

Brief Description: Regarding skill centers.

Sponsors: Representatives Quall, Fromhold, Priest, Curtis, Ormsby, Hunt, P. Sullivan, Haigh, Dunn, Kenney, Morrell and Wood.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 2/13/07, 2/16/07 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Creates a definition of a skill center and requires that enrolled students be funded at up to two full-time equivalents.
- Directs the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction to revise guidelines for skill centers to encourage development of satellite and branch campus programs; develop a capital plan and K-20 technology plan for skill centers; and broker the development of Skill Centers of Excellence in key economic sectors.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 6 members: Representatives Quall, Chair; Priest, Ranking Minority Member; Anderson, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Roach, Santos and P. Sullivan.

Staff: Barbara McLain (786-7383).

Background:

About 7,000 high school students from 85 school districts currently attend one of the 10 skill centers across the state that provide in-depth instruction in career and technical skills. Students typically attend the skill center for part of the day and their home high school for the remainder of the day. Skill centers also offer summer school programs.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Skill centers are not created in statute; instead, they function as a cooperative among participating school districts. The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) has developed guidelines for the initiation and operation of a skill center. The guidelines include that a skill center must enroll at least 70 percent of students on a core campus and must maintain at least 150 full-time equivalent (FTE) students.

The skill centers generate FTE funding through the general apportionment funding formula for enrolled students and receive enhanced funding for approved career and technical education courses. Skill centers are largely .6 FTE programs, leaving .4 FTE for the sending school district. If a student takes more than two classes at the sending school in addition to the skill center program, the sending school is not reimbursed for classes beyond the first two.

Skill centers are located in Vancouver, Tumwater, Wenatchee, Port Angeles, SeaTac, Everett, Spokane, Kennewick, Bremerton, and Yakima. The 2005-07 biennial and 2006 supplemental capital budgets included funding for feasibility studies for additional skill centers in Skagit County, Moses Lake, northeast King County, Pierce County, and Seattle.

The 2006 Legislature directed the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board (Workforce Board) to conduct a study of skill centers and make recommendations on how to provide increased opportunities for students in areas without a skill center, including the feasibility of using satellite sites, joint programs, and the K-20 network; how skill centers can reduce dropout rates; and how to address any additional funding needs.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

A skill center is defined as a regional career and technical education partnership established to provide access to industry-defined programs of study that prepare students for careers, employment, apprenticeships, and postsecondary education. Skill centers are operated by a host school district and governed by an administrative council under a cooperative agreement.

Beginning in the 2007-08 school year, students attending skill centers must be funded for all classes at the skill center and at the sending districts, up to two FTEs. The OSPI must ensure that Student Achievement Account funds generated by skill center students are returned to skill centers.

The OSPI, in cooperation with the Workforce Board, skill center directors, and the Washington Association for Career and Technical Education, must revise the skill centers policy guidelines so that the threshold enrollment at a skill center need not have a minimum of 70 percent of students enrolled on the core campus, in order to facilitate serving rural students through satellite programs or branch campuses.

Developmental planning for branch campuses is encouraged for underserved rural areas or high-density areas. Once a branch campus reaches sufficient enrollment to become self-sustaining, it can become a separate center or remain an extension of the founding center. Satellite and branch campus programs are encouraged to address high-demand fields.

The OSPI must develop a 10 year capital plan for skill centers. Subject to funding, the OSPI will conduct approved feasibility studies for serving rural and high-density area students and develop a master plan for creating a technology infrastructure to connect all skill centers to the K-20 network.

Subject to available funding, skill centers must provide rural and high-density area students with access to late afternoon, evening, and summer school programs in high-demand occupations. When possible, the programs must be targeted for credit retrieval, dropout prevention and intervention, and dropout retrieval. Skill centers that receive funding must evaluate their efforts.

The OSPI must establish and broker the development of "Skill Centers of Excellence" in key economic sectors of regional significance, as well as identify their roles in developing curriculum and methodologies for reporting course equivalencies for high school graduation. Once the Skill Centers of Excellence are established, the OSPI will seek funding for a Running Start for Career and Technical Education grant program to develop programs of study targeted to regionally-determined high-demand occupations.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The purpose of changes to the OSPI guidelines is to encourage expansion of skill centers. A reference to the Common School Construction Account is removed. Skill centers that receive any funds for dropout prevention must evaluate their efforts, not just from funds received under this bill.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) There are a significant number of success stories about skill centers and dropout prevention. We need to expand the opportunities and access into rural areas. Skill centers have programs that comprehensive high schools can't afford to offer. This will address the financial disincentive for high schools to send their students to a skill center. The small size and personal attention of a skill center, along with the high quality career and technical education, has a very positive influence. The type of articulated, cross-credited training programs that are developed jointly with community colleges and apprenticeship councils cannot happen without funding that supports students attending skill centers. The skill center model needs to be more flexible and accommodate branch campuses. The training provided at skill centers is vital to the success of the trades. If the per-student funding weren't capped, there would be opportunities to offer remediation classes before and after school to coincide

with students' attendance at a skill center. Skill centers are a major and integral part of our public education system.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Quall, prime sponsor; Dennis Kampe, Clark County Skills Center; Pamela Darling, Northeast Vocational Area Cooperative; Gerry Ringwood, Tri Tech Skills Center; John Merk, SouthEast Washington Joint Apprenticeship Training Council; John Aultman, New Market Skills Center; Craig Dwight, YV-Tech Skills Center; Wes Pruitt, Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board; Kathleen Lopp, Washington Association for Career and Technical Education; Mitch Denning, Alliance of Education Associations; Thomas Beirne, New Market Skill Center; and Kyra Kester, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: Michael Christianson, Bethel School District; Amber Carter, Association of Washington Business; Lucinda Young, Washington Education Association.